



Hon. Doris O. Matsui

Member of Congress

Doris O. Matsui

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Congresswoman Matsui Speaks In Support of a New Direction in Iraq; Hails Passage of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act

Washington, D.C. – Today, Congresswoman Doris Matsui (CA-5) rose on the House floor to reaffirm her support for a new direction in Iraq. Matsui joined her colleagues in voting for H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

The Act requires a responsible redeployment of U.S. troops beginning within 120 days of enactment and ending by April 1, 2008. It also requires the President to publicly justify the post-redeployment missions for the U.S. military in Iraq, and the minimum number of troops necessary to carry out those missions.

“At a time when there is mounting evidence that the President’s ‘surge’ policy is failing our troops, it is the responsibility of Congress to hold him accountable. We must act now to ensure that we do justice to the honorable service of the brave men and women who serve in our armed forces,” said Matsui.

The Administration has conceded that while violence continues in Iraq, the Iraqi government has failed to meet key benchmarks for political and economic success. These benchmarks were endorsed by the President in January, yet they have yielded unsatisfactory progress and political reconciliation in Iraq is non-existent.

Well into the fifth year of the war, and after \$450 billion spent, 3,600 American lives lost and more than 26,000 wounded, the American people are unquestionably in favor of a new direction in Iraq. More than 70% of the population is in favor of the removal of almost all U.S. troops from Iraq.

According to a report by the National Security Network, since the President announced his “surge” policy, more than 25,000 troops have been sent to Iraq. In that time frame, approximately 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded. In May alone, 127 American troops were killed in Iraq, making it the third most-deadly month since the war began.

Attached is the text of the statement delivered by Congresswoman Matsui on the House floor earlier this morning.

I thank the gentlelady from New York for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this rule and in support of the underlying bill.

Today presents us with another opportunity to change direction in Iraq—a change that is desperately needed. I have opposed this war from the beginning. And I have long supported ways to bring this war to a responsible close.

I urge my colleagues to seize this opportunity now before we do further disservice to the brave men and women in Iraq.

The last time I rose in opposition to our Iraq policy, I talked about George and Dee Heath from my hometown of Sacramento. All three of their sons serve in Iraq. Recently, I learned that one of their sons, David, was hit in an RPG attack on his convoy. Thank goodness he was only wounded and that he will be coming home to the States to recover.

Mr. Speaker, today's vote is about our responsibility to the Health's sons and the more than 150,000 other men and women in harms way. They are doing what is asked of them ... heroically ... patriotically.

It fills me with sorrow that more than 3,600 soldiers have paid the ultimate price for their heroism, including 385 from California. Our responsibility to them as their elected leaders should be... it *must* be ... to ensure that their mission is clear and achievable. Today, we have the opportunity to fulfill our responsibility as the President has not.

Sadly, the President's disastrous leadership is ignoring his duty to the troops and we cannot sit idly by.

The Iraqi government is not meeting any of its political, economic or military benchmarks.

The President's surge policy has had disastrous results—in fact, 600 troops have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded since he announced this policy.

Our troops are stranded on the front lines without clear guidance, without a clear mission. In light of such inept leadership by the President, the American people have lost their patience.

Most Americans support removing most troops by April. They want us to refocus on fighting terrorism. Yet still the President refuses to reconsider. It is clear from the President's blind stubbornness that Congress must show the President the way.

Our troops are at the breaking point. ... We are refereeing a civil war. The solution is a political one, not a military one.

But in this late and critical hour, you have to do more than talk about change. You have to vote for it. You have to fight for it.

Chairman Skelton's bill keeps the safety our troops and our nation's security at the forefront by changing course in Iraq.

I urge all of my colleagues to support it, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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